

Good news for sinners

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- [0 : 00] Let's begin our time of worship by singing to God's praise from Psalm 32. Psalm 32, the words on the screen and also in the red psalm book here.
- And verses 1 through to verse 5. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned all the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered.
- Down to the end of verse 5. To God's praise. We stand to sing. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned all the transgressions he hath done, whose sin is covered.
- Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, and in his spirit there is no guile, nor brought his founded in.
- When us I did refrain my speech, how silent was my tongue, my bones then waxed, or because I brought it all day long.
- [2 : 02] For upon me both day and night, thy hand did heavy lie, so that my moisture turned in, and summer struck thereby.
- I there upon have unto thee my sin acknowledged.
- I have not covered it. Likewise, my iniquity, I have not covered it.
- I will confess. I will confess unto the Lord, my trespasses said I, and of my sin, thou fear it is, forgive the iniquity.
- Let's unite our hearts in prayer.
- [3 : 48] Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning, we thank you for the good news even that we have sung there from the very beginning of this service.
- we thank you for the good news. We thank you that, as we come this morning, we come to a God who is gracious, and a God who is merciful, a God who is just, and who is pure, and who sees our sin, and does not overlook our sin, but calls us to come, as the psalmist came, to confess our sin.
- So we would take the words that we have sung, and bring them in prayer, at the beginning of this service this morning. I will confess unto the Lord, my trespasses, my sins said I, and of my sin, thou freely didst forgive the iniquity.
- We thank you for the truth of your word, the truth about us, we cannot see in full measure, the darkness of our own hearts.
- But Lord, we know that we are far from perfect. And as we look at our hearts through the lens of Scripture, we are told the truth about ourselves, that we are sinners, that we transgress, that we miss the mark.
- [5 : 23] We fall short of the standard, that you have designed for us to meet. We sin in thought, we sin in word, we sin in deed.
- We look back across even the last week, or the last few weeks, and we can think and cringe, even as we recall various things that we have done, and said, and not done, and not said, that constitutes sin.

And Lord, we don't hide it. We don't try to make excuses for it. But we come before you, and in that honesty that you require. You search us, you know us, Lord.

And as you reveal to us the state of our hearts, we ask, Lord, that you would forgive us for our sin. And we thank you that we have the promise, even in this psalm, that you freely forgive our iniquity.

We thank you that this is something freely offered to us, but something that came at great cost. This is the Lord's day. The day that we remember our Savior Jesus, he rose from the dead.

[6 : 34] And yet, Lord, we are reminded as we think about the fact that he rose from the dead, that first of all, he laid down his life. And he laid down his life and shed his blood, so that our sin could be forgiven.

So we thank you for such love, and for such great salvation, offered to us in Christ, and paid in full by the blood that was shed. We thank you that through his death and his resurrection, we are saved, we are justified.

And as we come, as the publican did in the parable that Jesus told, saying, Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

We thank you that we are declared righteous. So we pray that we would know that, every one of us this morning. And if there is anyone yet, who has not yet bowed the knee to Jesus, and has not yet confessed their sin.

We pray that even now, in the quietness of this moment, that we would do so. And that we would know the assurance, and the joy of your full salvation.

[7 : 41] We ask, Lord, that you would open our eyes to see Jesus. We pray that you would open our ears to hear the good news about Jesus. We pray that we may know the reality of the Holy Spirit moving in this place, in this morning.

And we pray that you would do a work amongst us. Your word will not return to you empty. That's your promise. And so, Lord, we pray that where there is lost souls present, that you may bring salvation.

And Lord, where we are your people, we ask that you would continue to sanctify us, and that you would make us more and more like Jesus. We ask, Lord, that you would give us courage, even as we've talked of already, to be able to go out and tell those around us about Jesus.

The fact that he is good news, and the forgiveness that we have taken hold of by faith, is offered also to them. So give us, Lord, opportunity and courage to be able to go out with that good news.

We pray for the services over the course of this day, here, and in all the denominations around us, every place where Christ crucified is preached. We ask, Lord, that you would add your blessing, that you would build your church.

[8 : 55] We pray, Lord, for the youth fellowship as they meet this afternoon. We ask that you would bless them, and that they would remember you, as we pray that the children would remember you, and trust you in the days of their youth.

We pray, Lord, for those who will gather this evening, both here and in Liverpool, to mourn and to seek your comfort. And we ask, Lord, that they may know your comfort.

We pray for Kathy-Ann, and pray for Myrda Farrakhar, and Craig, and Rachel, having lost a mother and a granny. We pray for Callum, having lost a half-sister, and for the extended family, Lord, as they gather.

We ask that you would minister your comfort to them, and the power of the Holy Spirit. And as your servants lead worship, we pray that we may hear the truth and the hope that there is in the Gospel.

We pray for those in Leverborough also who will meet. And we ask that they may know your comfort, and that they may know your help. They may know your strengthening, and your restoring touch upon the lives of all who will gather.

[10 : 06] And as we hear of death also in other places in the island this morning, we ask for your comfort to extend to all who are mourning.

We pray, Lord, now that you would continue with us in the remainder of this day. We pray for the conference that we've mentioned also, and for those who will come to bring your word.

We pray for your servants, and we ask that you would lay our word upon their hearts, and that you would open our hearts to that word, so that we may hear more and more about Jesus.

And that we may be given the courage and the tools even, as we open your word, to be able to go out and to share that Gospel. We hear our prayers, take away our sin, empty us, Lord, of self.

Fill us with the Holy Spirit, that we may see and hear and come in faith to Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please?

[11 : 08] Come forward, please. Come forward, please. Come forward. Come forward. Come forward. Come forward, please.

Come forward. I'm in a rush. How are you today, boys and girls? Good. Glasses. Glasses. We're going to make it short today, because I don't think I've got much voice left.

Do you like my new glasses? Yeah. What do you think of these glasses? I think I suit them. Smart Alex.

They think I suit them. What do you think? What's different about these glasses? Well, you have your eyes, and my beautiful one, you know, on it.

Oh, my word. Do you think I can properly see you? I look like a girl. Do you think I can properly see you? No.

[12 : 19] Why not? But there's two holes in there. There's two tiny little holes. I can see a tiny little bit, but do you think I can really properly see you? Not really.

And can you see my eyes very clearly just now? No. No, you can't. So these glasses are quite useless, aren't they? You need glasses like this, or like Lily's got, or like Michael's got, or Caitlin.

It's the same. I mean, these are funny glasses. They're more joke glasses, but they're not real, and they're not any use. Because if you want to know if somebody's happy, or if you want to know if somebody's sad, or if you want to know if somebody's wild, or if you want to know if somebody loves you, you look into their eyes, don't you?

I feel like that's something that's in the room. Yeah, you're starting to tell my sermon, Michael, aren't you? He knows where I'm going. He knows where I'm going.

Because sometimes you can say to somebody, and you look at photographs and family albums, and you know that just before the photograph has been taken, somebody said, and so the children are like that.

[13 : 41] And their mouths are smiling, but their eyes are not smiling. So if you want to know how somebody feels, if you want to know what's going on in here, then you look in somebody's eyes.

You know, today, when the big people and me start to look at the Bible, you can ask them about this at lunchtime.

Well, you ask them about this at lunchtime. What I'm going to tell you. We're going to be hearing today, in the Bible passage that we're reading, about Pharisees. You heard of Pharisees?

Do you know anything about Pharisees? And everybody thought the Pharisees were God's people, everybody thought they were people who were close to God, and they wore all the right clothes, and they said all the right things.

But, it was like a mask. And Jesus spoke to the Pharisees. And do you know what Jesus said to them?

[14 : 52] He said, you're hypocrites. Do you know what that word means? It means mask wearers. And they were pretending with their faces, and they were pretending with their lives, and they were pretending with the way that they looked.

That they were God's people. That Jesus looked at them, and do you know what? He could see behind the glasses. He could see behind the mask.

He could see Michael right into the heart. And he could see that the Pharisees, in spite of how they looked, they weren't God's people.

Now, I'm looking around this morning, and I can see smart trainers, and I can see cool clothes, and I can see some people who've got gel on their hair, and I can see smart suits.

And do you know what? We spend quite a lot of time in the morning thinking, what will I wear?

[16 : 02] How will I do my hair? Well, I used to do that, but I've got nothing to do anymore. We look in the mirror sometimes, and we take care about how we look, because people look at us, and they see us.

Listen to what God says to us. Listen to this. God says this. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

People look at the glasses, but the Lord sees behind the glasses, into the eyes, and right into the heart.

And do you know who the Lord is looking for in our hearts? The sin. Well, he sees our sin, and he tells us about our sin, and what do we do with our sin? We ask him to destroy it, Michael.

That's right. And he went to the cross to destroy our sin. So, if we went to take our sin away at the cross, who does God look for in our hearts when he sees into our hearts?

[17 : 16] He looks for Jesus. So, if we want to be God's people, it's not about the clothes we wear. It's not about the way we look.

It's not even always about the way we sound. It's about who's in our hearts. So, boys and girls, be sure that you've asked Jesus to come into your heart.

Man, people look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. When you go to the mirror tomorrow morning, and you start to style and spike your hair like some of you do, think about your hearts.

God is looking at your heart. Let's pray just now, will we? Dear Lord, we thank you that you are the God who sees, not just on the outside, but you see into our hearts.

And we thank you that you've told us, and the young ones here understand it as well. They were telling us it just now. You've told us about our sin. You've told us about the sin that's in our hearts.

[18 : 22] But we thank you that Jesus did come to destroy that sin. He did go to the cross to take it away. And we thank you that if we ask for that forgiveness, he destroys our sin.

He takes it all away. And we thank you, Lord, that when we ask you to come into our hearts, you've promised that you'll come, and you'll make us your people, your children.

So help us, we pray, every one of us, to ask you into our hearts so that we know that we are forgiven, that we are safe forever, that we have the promise of heaven, and that we are children of God.

And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing now, boys and girls. 671 Emission Praise. And it's on the screen.

There it is now. 671 in Emission Praise. There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.

[19 : 28] You might think, what does that mean? There is a fountain filled with blood. Whose blood do you think we're singing about there? God. Jesus' blood. Because when Jesus' blood washes us, our hearts are made clean.

So that's what we're singing about. We're singing about the blood of Jesus that makes us clean. So you come this way.

God. It is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, whose all their guilty stains.

Whose all their guilty stains. Whose all their guilty stains. Whose all their guilty stains.

And sinners' blood remain beneath that flood, whose all their guilty stains. The dying fear rejoice to see, the burden in His day.

[20 : 47] And let me, I ask by the sea, wash all my sins away. Wash all my sins away.

And let me, I ask by the sea, wash all my sins away.

Your dying love, your precious blood, shall never lose its blood. Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.

Be saved to sin no more. Be saved to sin no more. Till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more.

And since by faith I saw the sting, your joy would surprise. Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.

[22 : 15] And shall be till I die. And shall be till I die. When in an hopeless winter song, I'll sing your part to sing.

I'll sing your part to sing. I'll sing your part to sing.

I'll sing your part to sing. When in an hopeless winter song, I'll sing your part to sing.

Okay boys and girls, you head to Sunday school. You might have noticed there was a battle going on in that last verse.

And Stuart doesn't think he was winning. I don't think he was winning either. The last verse here, let me just read it out for you.

[23 : 37] It's possibly still on the screen. Maybe you're running us. There you go. It says in the mission phrase book, then in an nobler sweeter song, I'll sing your part to save.

When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave. The better way of singing that one, and the way that tends to be sung more often now is, and it's more biblical is, when this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave, then in a nobler sweeter song, I'll sing your power to save.

When we die physically, then our bodies go into the grave, but our souls go to be with the Lord, where we are able, in a nobler sweeter song, to sing your power to save.

So John Angus didn't get it wrong. The mission phrase book got it wrong. I think so. That's, I think, a better translation. We're going to read in God's word now from Mark chapter 2.

Mark chapter 2, and we'll read from verse 13 of the chapter. I will take a glance back at the previous section, when we come to preach.

[25 : 09] This is God's word. Once again, Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi's son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth.

Follow me, Jesus told him. And Levi got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and stardom, the sinners were eating with him and his disciples.

For there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law, who were Pharisees, saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, it is not the healthy need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. Now, John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.

Some people came and asked Jesus, how is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not? Jesus answered, how can the guests of the bridegroom fast?

[26 : 14] While he is with them, they cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. No one throws a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment.

If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and more the wine, and the wineskins will be ruined.

No, he pours new wine into new wineskins. On Sabbath, Jesus was going through the corn fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some ears of corn.

The Pharisees said to him, look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? He answered, have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?

In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God, and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for the priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.

[27 : 18] Then he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath. Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there.

Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with a shriveled hand, stand up in front of everyone.

Then Jesus asked him, which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill? But they remained silent.

He looked round at them in anger, and deeply distressed, at their stubborn heart, said to the man, stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

Then the Pharisees went out, and began to plot with the Herodians, how they might kill Jesus. Amen. And may God bless that view of his word to us.

[28 : 21] And we'll call him, and we'll let him listen to prayer. And God. Amen. Amen. So he killed us on soul, and there was an identity of this life, and never habit.

The mass of soulsão aha and the way were like you, like the thermal action march, as long and the shriveled and the fjasht, some butterflyeron Trusty that we were born to.

chapter 2 let's pray again our heavenly father we thank you for the word of God before us here this day and we ask that you would help us as we seek to study it we pray that you would help us to understand and help us to be carried along by the Holy Spirit in our thoughts and in our responses to the passage before us today we pray for those with us and we ask that you would bless each one as we bow in your presence we pray for those absent some who are sick some who are struggling with different things in life and we pray that you would meet them at the point of their need pray for those who are away from us at this time training for new jobs and absent for different reasons some on mission some on holiday and we pray that you would bless them where they are and that they may know your presence and that they may know that they are remembered and upheld by the prayers of your people and we pray for those also who are not here simply because they have decided not to come out this morning and Lord we ask that you would strive continue to strive with those who may be drifting that you would draw them to yourself in salvation or in reviving power so hear our prayers for ourselves and for others and bless us in your presence in Jesus name we pray

Amen one of the things I love about Mark's gospel is just the directness and the urgency of the gospel right from the beginning of the gospel and the message of the gospel is fired like a cannonball in the opening verse in the opening line the beginning the Greek doesn't even say the it's just beginning the beginning of the gospel the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of God the question I want to ask and then think through today is who is the gospel good news for the gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ the Son of God but who is the gospel good news actually for sometimes we hear a story or a result in a sports match and what's good news for one person is bad news for another person you might hear that Rangers were beaten 4-2 by Aberdeen in a football score now that score is good news to the Aberdeen fans it's good news to the Celtic fans bad news to the Rangers fans commiserations you might hear in the morning from the children's room it's snowing it's snowing it's snowing everything's white everything's white that's great news for the children it's less great news for Dahl and John Angus and others who are having to head out with a gritter at half past four in the morning and this account that Mark brings to us about Jesus is good news for some it's bad news for others so let's think about this message let's explore this passage and think about how this impacts us the gospel is it's bad news for the scribes and the Pharisees that's the first point the second point is it's good news for sinners it's bad news for the scribes and Pharisees that the self-proclaimed righteous people it's bad news for the sinner it's good news for the sinners though so first point bad news for the scribes and Pharisees and we get a hint of this as I said in the reading before we even come to the passage that we we read together if you glance back to chapter 2 and the beginning of the chapter from verse 1 down there to verse 12 we have the account of the healing of the paralytic and we read that passage and looked at it briefly last Lord's Day we know the story where the paralytic is brought in through the roof before Jesus and Jesus addresses his primary problem first and gives him forgiveness of sin and then he heals him of his paralysis and the crowds were absolutely amazed and enthralled by Jesus and what he had done in verse 12 it says they praised God saying we have never seen anything like this but the scribes who were essentially the religious lawyers the theologians the religious experts they were critical and it says there in verses 6 and 7 of chapter 2 some of the teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves why does this fellow that's Jesus they're talking about

[46 : 11] why does he talk like that he's blaspheming who can forgive sins but God alone and what they were saying actually was right their theology was correct only God could forgive sins and they knew that because they were students of the Old Testament scriptures but as they looked to Jesus and as they listened to Jesus they were not willing to accept that this Jesus was the God man and henceforth he was not able in their opinion to give the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and so in their statements in their questions in their dismissal of Jesus they rejected Jesus as Messiah Mark begins by saying this is the good news about Jesus the Messiah the Christ the Son of God but the scribes the religious experts they rejected Jesus as Messiah and the Son of God see they had their own ideas about God and they were the experts they had their expectations about the Messiah and how the Messiah would behave and the way that he would speak and what he would do and how he would do it and the problem they had was that Jesus did not fit with their way of thinking and that's still the problem that many people have perhaps even some people here there are many who want a God but the God that they want needs to fit with their way of thinking the God they want will do for them the things they want them to do in the way that they design and at the time that they describe it's a problem where our culture today we see this as a such a prevalent thing in our culture this is God's word the Bible is God's word it's a book like no other book it's inspired by God the Holy Spirit he is the author but today at the cultural level if there's bits of the Bible that we don't like we cut it out if there's bits of the Bible that make us uncomfortable we contextualise them and we say well that was for back there and then but it's not for for here and now it's not for us and when we do that we make ourselves God over above God we put ourselves as a culture in his position we in essence design and build a God that will justify the way that we want to live and we reject the one true God and we reject his revelation of himself and his design for how we are to live and how we are to be saved and that's what the scribes and the Pharisees were doing and we see the beginning of that in Jesus' encounter with the paralytic at the beginning of chapter 2 and we see the next subsequent stages of that as we read on there's a clash between

Jesus and the religious leaders in Levi's house looking at verses 13 to 17 and we'll come back to that we'll come back to that at the end and then from verse 18 through to chapter 3 and verse 6 we see two or actually three further clashes between Jesus and the religious authorities over the religious traditions that they had become expert in there's two main areas where Jesus clashes with the religious experts the first is over fasting and the second is over Sabbath observance so let's look at these two areas where there's these three clashes the first one is from verses 18 to verse 22 and it concerns fasting I'm not going to read the verses again but we know from I assume that we know fasting is something that had become the religious tradition of the people back then on Monday and Thursday the Pharisees and those that they sought to influence they fasted and the

Pharisees and the scribes being the type of people they were they did nothing in secret they wanted everybody to see them they wanted everybody to admire them and to give them a round of applause for all the things that they were doing so they'd make a big show of their fasting they'd walk past Island Bites on a Monday and a Thursday and the smell of the onions and the smell of the burgers would be coming through their nostrils and they'd turn the other way and say I can't have that I'm fasting today as they shot a disapproving glare at anybody that went near it that was the Pharisee that was the scribe they'd go along with their long faces and they did everything in that way because they wanted everybody to see how holy they were and yet on Monday and Thursday it seemed that Jesus and his disciples were not fasting in fact

Jesus and his disciples they weren't just not fasting they were feasting and they weren't just feasting but they were feasting with some very unsavory types as far as the religious police could see and so they challenged Jesus over this they classed with him to first clutch and the second and third glasses are over Sabbath observance and we see that from verses 23 of chapter 2 through to the early part of chapter 3 now Sabbath observance had become an absolute religious minefield clearly God in his word had given the commandment that his people should not work but the Pharisees said well what's work we can't leave the little people with their consciences to try to understand what work is we better define what work is so they thought about defining what was work and what was not work what was permissible on the Sabbath and what was not permissible on the Sabbath and just to give you a flavour of it to carry things in their opinion on the Sabbath was work so nothing heavier than a fig could be carried you could carry a fig and remain holy but an orange that would probably make you non-holy that's work to lift things and to throw things that was work as far as they were concerned so if you threw something in the air but you needed two hands or had to catch it with the other hand that was work but if you threw something in the air and you could catch it with the hand that you threw it that was okay some of you are making faces and that's the right thing to do it's ridiculous that something like that would make one holy or non-holy that was their rules a woman couldn't bathe on the Sabbath she couldn't run a bath and go into a bath why was that it's in case the water spilled and the woman would then be tempted to mop her up that would be work a woman could not look in the mirror on the

Sabbath why was that well it was in case she saw a grey hair was then tempted to pull it out that was work and the objection that the Pharisees had to Jesus and his disciples was verse 23 that they had picked some heads of grain as they went through the fields and that was by definition according to the scribes and Pharisees that was a form of reaping which was classified by the scribes and Pharisees as work and in the healing in chapter 3 that they had watched Jesus to see if he would have the audacity to do that was not permissible because it was only permissible to heal somebody on the Sabbath if that person's life was in danger now you might ask where in the Old

[55 : 49] Testament does it say anything about that and you'll be looking all day and all night it says it nowhere it's just another made up rules and so Jesus as he responded to the scribes and the Pharisees he takes them back in specifics to the Old Testament to show them David he goes to 1st Samuel 21 we're not going there we have no time he responds by taking them back to the scriptures that they were supposedly expert in to show them the error of their ways but in general terms relating both to the fasting and the Sabbath day rules and every other old rule that they peddled Jesus he paints a picture he gives him a story he gives him a parable a word picture of old wine and new wineskins and everybody knew that old wine and new wineskins old cloth and new cloth they were not compatible if you tried to put the two together everything just shredded and burst everything that was tried to be contained was lost and Jesus showed them these things that were not compatible and in doing that he was making clear that their rules were not compatible with his gospel fasting as it was set out in the old testament

Leviticus 16 fasting was something that was designed to lead people to come humbly and repentantly before God in prayer that was what it was by design but they had taken it and they had distorted it in such a way that they were now using it as a means not to come humbly before God but to put themselves out there proudly before others so that they could show that they were better and holier than other people so fasting by design they turned inside out it was now doing the opposite of what it was designed to do and the sabbath was God's design for his people to find rest and blessing but interpreting and adhering to their sabbath rules had now become a specialist area of religious professional work and it brought no rest and it brought no blessing and it had become so mutilated that the scribes and the religious experts were willing to say the man with the withered hand don't bless him let him suffer let's uphold

God's law and let him suffer that's how far removed they had come and become from God's mind and God's way the sabbath which was made for man for his blessing was now being used to bring anxiety and conflict and suffering and Jesus says to them in summary your way scribes and Pharisees does not fit with my way your religious works and codes are not compatible with my grace says Jesus now were they willing to listen with the scribes and the Pharisees be open to the call of Christ to receive the salvation the grace that they could not earn by adhering to their precise religious rules would they be willing to swallow their pride and say we got this wrong would they be willing to receive the charity of God and set aside all the gubbins that they've been picking up and just come with empty hands would they be willing to admit the sickness of their own hearts and receive the health that only

Christ could bring no way said the Pharisees no way said the scribes and the men in the suits they were the righteous ones and they would rather kill Jesus than submit them so chapter 3 verse 6 shows this was the beginning of their designs to kill Christ and yet the irony and the tragedy and the reality was that unless they repented they would meet Jesus as judge they were trying to judge him but unless they repented they would meet Jesus as judge and he would sentence them to that everlasting death and hell which was set aside for those who would not submit to

Christ so the news about Jesus for the scribe and the Pharisee was bad news and for all who are like them if we're trying to save ourselves if we think we are good enough without Jesus if we think that our religious acts and rituals if we think that our church attendance if we think that our good works and our giving to charity and our fasting and our sabbath observance if we think that our legal compliance and our rich religious history and heritage can save us then the message of Jesus is bad news for you because

[62 : 57] Jesus says to you and I we cannot save ourselves no matter what we do no matter how far up the religious ladder we are able to climb no matter how many rituals we can tick off in our book of religion no matter how many great uncles we have who were free church or free Presbyterian or Church of Scotland ministers no matter how holy our parents and our grandparents were we cannot save ourselves there's none righteous says Jesus none healthy not one and that was bad news for the striving Pharisee second point last point the same news was good news for sinners verse 13 we'll look at this wee episode here now once again

Jesus went out beside the lake a large crowd came to him and he began to teach them as he walked along he saw Levi son of Alphius Levi would become Matthew through Matthew's gospel he saw Levi son of Alphius sitting at the tax collector's booth follow me Jesus told him and Levi got up and followed him while Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples for they were many there were many who followed him now the reality is that we are all sinners that's the biblical truth the only person who never sinned was Jesus but this passage and these verses that we just read are about those who knew in their own hearts that they were sinners and Levi was one who knew and everybody who knew

Levi knew that he was a sinner a sinner of the first order he was a tax collector for the Roman government and the modern equivalent I think we tend to have tax collectors and suits and civil servants who are very respectable types that's what we have in our minds perhaps but the tax collector for the Roman government the modern equivalent would probably be kind of a mafia underworld gangster loan type loan shark type of person the empire had a figure of tax that they demanded for a particular area and they would employ people like Levi to gather that figure so let's say that the Roman empire had set a figure of half a million pounds for Levi's area Levi's job was to go and get that money now if Levi in coming to his own people managed to gather not half a million pounds but 800,000 pounds then 300,000 pounds goes into his pocket as profit so that's what he would have done

Levi and all like him they collected as much taxes as they possibly could using whatever means that they could the tax collectors in that day were not able to be involved in court proceedings they were too unreliable as far as the civil authorities were concerned they were too disreputable they were known for operating out with the law they didn't come with a clipboard to collect your taxes they came with whatever weapons they required to make sure that they gathered your taxes they were violent they were unscrupulous sinners and yet Jesus said to Levi follow me and Levi did nobody else would dare to go to someone like

Levi and say follow me but Jesus did Levi was the type of person who said you follow me before somebody was done in but Jesus said Levi follow me and he followed immediately and here we see the irresistible grace and power and authority of Jesus one recurring lesson here is that Jesus very often opens the ears and hearts of the people that we least expect so let's be willing for Christians to speak to the least likely the most antagonistic the most dangerous characters in this community to be willing to actually go and speak a word about

[68 : 45] Christ to the people that we fear as well as the people that we're comfortable with Jesus said in John 10 my sheep hear my voice the Christian's job is to speak with the voice of Christ so that sheep who are not yet in his flock will hear and follow Levi sinner as he was with a criminal record likely as long as his arm a notorious character he heard he followed he instantly became a disciple of Christ he didn't just have an encounter with Jesus that made a ten minute impression on his life immediately he starts to follow Jesus and we see that in the way that

Levi responds to Christ there's two things and we'll finish with this there's two things that Levi does that indicate to us that he is now a disciple of Christ one he wants to be with Jesus and two he wants his friends to meet Jesus he wants to be with Jesus so he throws a party of sorts and he asks Jesus to come to his house verse 15 and he eats with him he doesn't want Jesus to go away he wants Jesus to be close to him and that's the primary desire and occupation of a disciple a disciple is called to be with him Mark chapter 3 verse 14 will come to him and in these times having dinner was not a microwave meal over a five minute chat to eat with someone was to enjoy friendship and fellowship and quality time together right and so

Levi says to Jesus come to my house I want you to be with me I want to be with you Revelation 3 20 Jesus says here I am I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and eat with him and he with me Levi heard the knock of Christ he opened the door of his life and here Jesus is eaten with the tax collector the gangster not the man in the suit John 14 23 Jesus says if anyone loves me he will obey my teaching my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him Levi now loves

Christ and Jesus is making his home with Levi Levi Levi wants to be with Jesus and secondly finally he wants to introduce his friends to Jesus so he has what St.

Lerf Ferguson calls a conversion party he wants all his shady friends to meet this man who is changing his life great idea isn't it it's quite a contrast with so often what happens here isn't it somebody comes to somebody comes to faith to all the friends that they once had there's no longer any connection and they just drift away from each other Levi says to all his friends I want you to come to my house I want you to meet Jesus he doesn't say to his friends I can't have any more to do with you he says to his friends come and meet Christ we should do that we should follow that example open the doors of our homes

[73 : 25] God has given us them so people can come and meet Christ that's what this church is for a place where we open the door we say come and meet Christ when did you last invite somebody to come and meet Christ so we have a rogues gallery here verse 15 many not few but many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples every dark and dangerous character was there all those that Levi did business with they were there Pharisees were there too looking in the window on the fringes not part of it standing in judgment over it this shouldn't be happening they say and they're ready with a word of criticism when the teachers of the law verse 16 who were

Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors they asked his disciples why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners and hearing this Jesus said to them it is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick I have not come to call the righteous but sinners Pharisees were not hearing the call of Christ they were righteous they were spiritually healthy they said they saw no need of Jesus but the prostitutes and the debt collectors and the gangsters and the bouncers and the publicans and the twisted accountants and the drug dealers and the drunks the hooligans they were hearing the call and as far as they were concerned this

Jesus was good news because he had come to offer forgiveness and salvation and a new start even to people like them foul I to the fountain fly we're going to sing in a second wash me saviour or I die this was a gallery of the foul people and yet Levi was now one of the washed people and again here we see a preview of what Christ had come to do in his life in this moment what is he doing he's identifying with sinners fast forward just a little and in his death what will

Christ be doing he will be identified with sinners he poured out his life said Isaiah unto death and was numbered with the transgressors for he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors are you one of them in his life Christ called sinners in his death Christ saved sinners in his resurrection Christ justified sinners and in his return Christ will glorify sinners this is good news for sinners and if we see our sin and turn from it to follow

Christ this is good news for us heavenly father we pray that you would help us as we think about these verses to see where we are presently before you we pray that we would not be like the scribes and Pharisees who were trying to justify themselves with their good works and religious acts which Isaiah tells us are like filthy rags before you help us we pray to be like Levi who saw the sickness of his heart who saw the sin that he needed to be cleansed of and who followed Christ enable us to be like him and to come foul as we are to that fountain of blood where we can be washed and made clean and we ask all this in

[79 : 16] Jesus name Amen Verse Jeez Amen Bye man I hear a mano virgin lord